

VZCZCXRO3522  
PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHDA RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHFL RUEHIK RUEHKW RUEHLA  
RUEHLN RUEHLZ RUEHPOD RUEHROV RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHSQ #0736/01 2540615  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 110615Z SEP 07  
FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6501  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0024  
RHMFIUU/CDR TF FALCON  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA 4337  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUESEN/SKOPJE BETA  
RUEHSQ/USDAO SKOPJE MK  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000736

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE (PFEUFFER)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [MK](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KV](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: POLICE CHIEF KILLED IN FIREFIGHT WITH  
FUGITIVE NEAR KOSOVO BORDER

#### SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) A local police station chief was killed, and two of his colleagues wounded, in a September 10 firefight with an ethnic Albanian fugitive and his accomplices near the village of Vaksince, near the Kosovo border. It is not clear whether the fugitive and his accomplices ambushed the police, or whether the incident developed out of a botched police attempt to arrest the fugitive, who is wanted on murder charges and charges of threatening Prime Minister Gruevski. The fugitive, who was wounded in the firefight and whose brother was killed during the incident, is in a Pristina hospital under KPS guard. Both UNMIK and the KPS are coordinating with Macedonian authorities to effect his eventual return to face justice in Macedonia. We will continue to convey to the MOI the need to act with restraint in dealing with the residents of Vaksince as they pursue an investigation into the incident. End summary.

#### POLICE STATION COMMANDER KILLED IN FIREFIGHT WITH FUGITIVE

¶2. (SBU) MOI Director of Police Todorovski informed our DOJ rep September 10 that the ethnic Albanian police station commander of the village of Matejce had been killed -- and two other police officers wounded -- during a firefight early that morning with an ethnic Albanian fugitive, Zaim Halili, and several accomplices near the town of Vaksince, close to the Kosovo border. According to Todorovski, Halili (the nephew of Xhemail Hiseni, aka Commander Jamie Shea, who was recently rearrested after escaping from Idrizovo prison) was wounded in the stomach and leg, but escaped to Kosovo. An accomplice, Skender Halili (Zaim Halili's brother) was also killed in the firefight, as confirmed by OSCE and Halili's family. The MOI also reports that another accomplice, Xheladin Hiseni, a relative of Xhemail Hiseni, was killed,

but that claim has not been confirmed.

13. (SBU) Later reports from UNMIK indicated that Halili or an accomplice contacted UNMIK for urgent medical aid, and was transported for treatment to a hospital in Pristina in an ambulance summoned by UNMIK personnel. He currently is under KPS guard at the hospital. The KPS and UNMIK are working with Macedonian authorities to return Halili, once he recovers, to Macedonia, where there is an international warrant for his arrest on attempted murder charges unrelated to the September 10 firefight. MOI officials are preparing a second warrant for his arrest on charges in the September 10 incident.

AMBUSHED POLICE PATROL? OR ACTION TO ARREST HALILI?

14. (SBU) According to the MOI, the police chief and his partners were sitting in their patrol car during a routine patrol of the Vaksince area shortly after midnight on September 10. A vehicle approached the police car, passed it, then halted. The car then reversed direction and, as it approached the police vehicle, the occupants opened fire on the police. The police chief exited the vehicle and returned fire. During the ensuing gun battle, the police chief and Skender Halili were killed; the two other police officers, both ethnic Macedonians, were wounded. An OSCE field monitor who examined the car in which Halili and his accomplices had been riding reported "some 50 or more bullet entry/exit points" in the vehicle.

15. (SBU) Contradicting the MOI version of events, both the Mayor of Lipkovo (from the ethnic Albanian opposition DUI party) and DUI leaders claimed to international community representatives that Halili was shot when police opened fire during an operation to arrest him. NOTE: Halili was also wanted in Macedonia for threatening to abduct the Prime

SKOPJE 00000736 002 OF 002

Minister and to kill DPA President Menduh Thaci following the successful police operation in which his uncle Xhemail Hiseni was recaptured after escaping from Idrizovo prison. END  
NOTE.

NEXT STEPS

16. (SBU) Later in the day on September 10, police cordoned off the village of Vaksince in an attempt to secure evidence at the scene of the crime. OSCE field staff, however, reported that villagers there would not allow police to enter the area, and the MOI told us that Skender Halili's family refused to release the vehicle to the MOI for forensics testing, despite an appeal from the ethnic Albanian Deputy MOI. The MOI is now seeking OSCE's assistance in persuading the family to release the vehicle.

COMMENT

17. (SBU) For now, it is not clear whether the firefight was the result of an intentional ambush by Halili and his accomplices against the police patrol, a chance encounter that erupted into gunfire, or a police operation against Halili gone bad. With tempers in Vaksince flaring over the death of Skender Halili, we have stressed to the MOI the importance of acting with restraint in the coming days to avoid an escalation of the violence. We will continue to convey that message to our MOI counterparts, while supporting the eventual return of Halili to Macedonia to face justice in the police chief's death. End Comment.  
NAVRATIL